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(202) 226-7270



U.S. House of Representatives  
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
Washington, DC 20515

October 24, 2002

JOHN M. SPRATT, JR., SOUTH CAROLINA  
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THOMAS S. KAHN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR  
AND CHIEF COUNSEL  
(202) 226-7200

Veterans Groups Decry “Damage”  
of Continuing Resolution

Dear Democratic Colleague,

While many may believe a continuing resolution is a reasonable solution to a budget stalemate, in fact it prolongs hardship for already-encumbered programs like veterans medical care. I commend to you the attached letter from several veterans’ groups, which expresses “deep concern over the damage that will be done to veterans health care if the Department of Veterans Affairs is funded at FY 2002 levels in any continuing resolution.” The House of Representatives must make good on its promises to veterans.

Last week, the Republican-led House of Representatives left town without completing work on eight of the thirteen regular appropriations bills, including the bill that funds veterans medical care. Failure to pass spending bills confirms the unworkable nature of the Republican budget and short-changes many important priorities, including our nation’s veterans.

CBO estimates the amount of funding needed to keep programs operating at their current level in future years, which is known as the “baseline” amount. For veterans medical care, the funding provided under the continuing resolution represents a cut of \$659 million from amount needed simply to keep pace with 2002 funding.

But 2002 funding falls short. The Department of Veterans Affairs faces high patient demand and rapidly-growing costs. Federal resources have not kept pace with this workload. To address this obvious and growing problem, in August, Congress passed an additional \$417 million for 2002 veterans medical care as part of the supplemental appropriations bill. But the President blocked 66 percent of this \$417 million increase.

The amount provided by a continuing resolution represents the 2002 level of funding – generally the appropriated amount for 2002 plus any amount provided in supplemental appropriations. Because the President turned aside \$275 million in supplemental funding for veterans medical care, the amount provided in the continuing resolution provides even less than Congress intended.

Congress must pass the 2003 appropriations bills, not only because it is our job, but because veterans programs suffer in the meantime.

Sincerely,

John M. Spratt, Jr.  
Ranking Democratic Member

Funding For Veterans Medical Care in Billions of Dollars	
2002 Appropriated Level	21.3
CBO 2003 Baseline	22.9
2003 Appropriations Bill (not yet passed by the House)	23.9
Continuing Resolution	22.2

# THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET

## *A Budget for Veterans by Veterans*

October 3, 2002

The Honorable John M. Spratt, Jr.  
Ranking Minority Member  
House Committee on the Budget  
214 O'Neill House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Dear Representative Spratt:

On behalf of the members of the authors of *The Independent Budget*, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars, we are writing to express deep concern over the damage that will be done to veterans health care if the Department of Veterans Affairs is funded at FY 2002 levels in any continuing resolution approved by the Congress.

As we are sure you are aware, VA has been faced with a growing crisis of soaring patient demand and rising costs that have not been covered by available resources. Latest VA projections indicate that approximately 286,000 veterans are currently waiting 6 months or longer for initial or follow-up treatment. Budget shortfalls are plaguing every aspect of the continuum of care provided in VA health care facilities. Congress attempted to address this situation by providing \$417 million in supplemental funding for FY 2002 knowing that funding levels were inadequate even to meet the demands on the system last fiscal year. Unfortunately, the VA only received \$142 million of that supplemental funding.

*The Independent Budget* recommended a \$3.1 billion increase in funding to meet the growing demand on VA health care in FY 2003. The House of Representatives

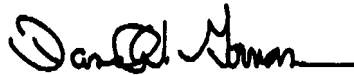
and the Senate Committee on the Budget recommended a \$2.6 billion increase in their versions of the Budget Resolution for this fiscal year. The Senate Appropriations Committee, recognizing the soaring costs of VA health care, approved a \$2.6 billion increase in health care funding for this fiscal year as well. Legislative bodies in both chambers have realized that the Administration's request for this fiscal year was wholly inadequate. We strongly urge you to adopt funding levels in the next continuing resolution, at a minimum, at the \$2.6 billion increase level to help ease the strain currently placed on sick and disabled veterans seeking the health care services they have earned and deserve.

Thank you for your continuing consideration and support.

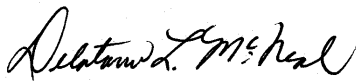
Sincerely,



James B. King  
National Executive Director  
AMVETS



David W. Gorman  
Executive Director  
Disabled American Veterans



Delatorro L. McNeal  
Executive Director  
Paralyzed Veterans of America



Robert E. Wallace  
Executive Director  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
of the United States